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THE AMERICAN MAGAZINE OF ART

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THE EDITOR,

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DISFIGURING WASHINGTON

Under the direction of the present administration plans have been made for the erection of a building to serve as a power plant to furnish heat and light for the various Government buildings in Washington. The location chosen and authorized by Congress is the water front adjacent to Potomac Park at the foot of Fourteenth Street. The building which has been planned under the supervision of the Supervising Architect's Office of the Treasury Department is to be 80 feet high with four smoke-stacks, 16 feet in diameter and 190 feet above the water level. It is to cost approximately \$1,500,000. The erection of such a building surmounted by these smoke-stacks would be seriously detrimental to the beauty of the National Capital, becoming a dominant note in almost every vista and perpetually marring the splendid park system which is being developed with such skill and effect in accordance with the Burnham Park Commission plan for Washington.

Although the President of the United States has issued an executive order that no building be erected in the city of Washington until the plans be submitted to the Federal Art Commission for approval, the contract for this building was let by the Secretary of the Treasury ten days or more before the plans for the building were submitted to the Art Commission. It is claimed that this failure to comply with the executive order was an oversight, but when the Commission of Fine Arts reported adversely upon both building and site and strongly urged a reconsideration of both, its judgment was questioned and will apparently be set aside. To prevent this error Senator Newlands introduced an amendment in the Urgent Efficiency Bill suspending all work of construction until the matter could be thoroughly considered in the light of expert advice.

The American Federation of Arts, The American Institute of Architects, civic and artistic organizations throughout the country immediately made protest to Congress against the erection of the building in accordance with plans disapproved by the Federal Commission of Fine Arts. Strangely enough it is claimed by those who are not experts that the building despite its tall smoke-stacks and its emplacement in the center of the park system would not intrude objectionably upon city vistas, that the site being on "the commercial water front" is entirely suitable, and that the saving in expense in the matter of the heat and light supply fully justifies its erection.

The Commission of Fine Arts is composed of Charles Moore, Cass Gilbert, Herbert Adams, Peirce Anderson, Thomas Hastings, Edwin H. Blashfield and Frederick Law Olmsted, experts in city planning and in matters pertaining to art. Certainly their judgment is final. The economy which is urged is that which has been found in the past exceedingly extravagant. The point of view which is maintained by those in authority is that of ignorance which persists in disregarding the value of specialized knowledge and expert judgment. It is altogether a sorry and discouraging spectacle. A power plant ill placed can be removed. The grave question, therefore, is not whether the beauty of Washington be temporarily spoiled, but whether the

nation as a whole is prepared to recognize the value of art as a national asset and to avail itself of the expert service of those of its citizens who have added to an endowment of talent years of training, or whether it is still ignorant and blind. Monumental errors without number witness to such ignorance in the past. It is unfortunate that further testimony to this effect should be given and at such cost.

THE 1916 CONVENTION

The Seventh Annual Convention of The American Federation of Arts will be held in Washington, on the 17th, 18th and 19th of May. The chief topic chosen for consideration at this Convention is "Art and the People." The sessions will be held at the Willard Hotel. There will be distinguished speakers who will treat the various phases of the main subject from the standpoint both of experience and knowledge, and each paper will be open to general discussion. Big problems will be presented and a definite order followed with the idea of practical accomplishment. There will be the usual programme of entertainment and the Convention will close, as it did last year, with a dinner at which there will be distinguished speakers. Plans are rapidly taking shape and the promise is of even a more enthusiastic and successful gathering than was had last May. The American Association of Museums will hold its annual meeting in Washington the first part of the same week; in fact, the two meetings will overlap by a day. It is hoped and believed that this will add to the convenience of those desiring to attend both Conventions and will also insure increased interest and success.

ALEXANDER W. DRAKE

The death in New York on February 4th of Alexander W. Drake removed another prominent figure and personality from the art world. Mr. Drake was for many years art editor of the *Century Magazine*, and with Mr. Gilder did much to establish the art of illustration on a high plane in this country. Indeed Mr. Drake in this capacity through his excellent judgment and keen intuitions rendered a large and conspicuous service to the cause of American art and one which should not be forgotten.

MEDALS OF HONOR

The Architectural League of New York opened its annual exhibition on the evening of February 4th in the Fine Arts Building with a garden party this year instead of the usual dinner. At that time the medals of honor were awarded as follows: For architecture to Cass Gilbert, for sculpture to Herbert Adams, for painting to Violet Oakley.

NOTES

EXHIBITIONS EXCHANGED During the month of January, the Detroit Museum of Art and the Albright Art Gallery, Buffalo, exchanged a selected portion of their permanent collections. Both of these Museums have developed important American sections. The Albright Art Gallery has also made purchases of representative works by modern French, German and English artists. The collection lent by the Albright Gallery to Detroit, therefore, constituted a contemporary international display in which the note of modernity was strong. The Detroit Museum of Art on the other hand presented in Buffalo a selected portion of its fine Old Master collection, the gift of the late James E. Scripps, the splendid portrait by John Hoppner, presented by the late Edward C. Walker, Esq., as well as pictures by American artists. As a writer in the *Bulletin* of the Detroit Museum very truly says, "The benefits of reciprocal exhibitions of this character cannot be overestimated."

ART IN OKLAHOMA During the month of January the first annual art exhibition comprising works by Oklahoma artists was held in the Administration Building of the University of Oklahoma at Norman. This exhibition included original paintings in oil, water color and pastel, fifty-six in all, representing nineteen artists. A gold medal was awarded to Mlle. Henrietta Clopath, Tulsa; a silver medal to Father R. S. Gerrer, Shawnee; a bronze medal to Miss Nellie Shepherd, Oklahoma City and honorable mention to Miss Annie Smith and Mr. Harold Gimeno. The exhibition was assembled and held under the direction of a special exhibition committee.